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# American Art Journal.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 1866.

PUBLICATION OFFICE, 806 BROADWAY.

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## OPENING OF THE NEW ORGAN AT PLYMOUTH CHURCH.

The official opening of the large organ built by the Hooks of Boston for Plymouth Church, took place on Tuesday evening. The church was crowded in every part, as might have been expected, as beside the congregation who were naturally anxious to hear their organ displayed by master hands, a large number of invitations were issued to outside parties. The desire that the services of Mr. George W. Morgan should be secured was so generally expressed, that Mr. Beecher yielded to the pressure, and engaged him at his own expense for the occasion. The other performers were Mr. J. Wilcox and Mr. Muller, the organist of the church.

In our previous notice we stated that "the foundation of the organ was not of sufficient strength to sustain the brilliant superstructure," but we did not press this point, because the style of Mr. Wilcox is essentially brilliant, and we thought that the latent strength, if any, might yet be developed by other organists of a different school. Such was not the case. On the contrary, the more dramatic and powerfully contrasted the playing, the more evident it became that our first judgment was correct. When we read the scheme we were half satisfied that the choral parts of the organ, the diapasons and the pedal manual were insufficient to balance the superstructure, fancy stops, &c. The Hooks in their scheme have sacrificed the solid grandeur of power to show and brilliancy. In the brilliant points, as we have said before, the organ is truly beautiful. The voicing of the solo stops cannot be surpassed; each stop is a separate and distinguishing excellence. But this alone does not make a great organ. Brilliancy will do well enough for mere solo exhibition, but for the true and solid in art, and for the support of a

large choir more weight is wanted in the middle and lower portions of the organ. More diapason power is wanted in the great organ, and at least three or four more powerful stops in the pedals. The 32-foot pipe, which should tell, does not, probably for the want of sufficient pressure, while the "tuba mirabilis," a magnificent stop, from over-pressure, speaks so peremptorily that it is impossible to introduce it harmoniously or blendingly, as it stands out immediately alone. It is not only bright and brilliant, but somewhat blatant. If this were moderated and the necessary strength added, Hooks' Plymouth Church organ would stand the test of the severest criticism, and might challenge the whole country to match it. These changes and additions which we consider necessary would cost some money, and this the builders could not afford, for the work has been so faithfully and splendidly executed that we doubt if they have realized any profit. When we say that the pneumatic action cost over \$3,000, it may well be imagined that their profit must be very small, if any. But they have produced an organ which, in point of perfection of mechanism, in action and the well considered contrivances for the production and the regulation of power, and in the perfect voicing of the solo stops, cannot be excelled here or elsewhere.

Mr. Wilcox was not up to his usual standard in his opening solo; he appeared to be nervous; but in his subsequent improvisation, in which he displayed the various exquisite solo stops, he recovered himself, and justified the eulogiums we bestowed on him in our first article. He was warmly applauded, and received the honor of an encore.

Mr. George W. Morgan displayed his perfect mastery of the organ, *per se*. Although the instrument was almost entirely new to him, he handled it in a perfectly familiar way, making and varying his combinations with the utmost ease and rapidity. Under his hands the organ spoke all that it could speak, and although the absence of due weight was inevitably apparent, his performances were brilliant in the extreme. He played with all his heart; he reserved none of his power, for, though heavily taxed, having to play four pieces and respond to two encores, he did full and ample justice to the organ intrusted to his care, developing its powers to the fullest extent of his knowledge and technical ability. Mr. Morgan always rises to occasions, and never falls below his high standard when the task is difficult and the responsibility great.

Mr. F. F. Muller cut but a very sorry figure between these two fine organists, Messrs. Morgan and Wilcox. He played his first solo after the manner of a learner, and although he made better work of his duet with Mr. Wilcox, and his subsequent solo, he was certainly out of place on this occasion.

We think it would be a wise policy on the

part of the congregation to raise a few thousand dollars and let the builders make the additions which we have suggested to this, in most respects, really splendid organ. It would then be an attraction which would draw thousands to hear it, and the additional cost would be speedily returned by the results of a series of concerts, which the desire of the public to listen to the grandest organ in America, would surely demand. The advice may not be palatable, but if followed out, it would enhance the value of their property two-fold.

Mr. JEROME HOPKINS, the pianist, has been lecturing in Newark, N. J., by invitation of the clergy and prominent citizens, on the subject of "Orpheonic Choral Schools and Boy Choirs." The citizens of that "provincial village" intend organizing Orpheon Schools there.

## THE STUDIOS.

As a natural consequence of the warm weather, the studios are almost all deserted. Their occupants have gone to the country, and are now busy making sketches and studies for the pictures they will paint next fall and winter. And now that our artists are studying from nature, it is to be hoped they will endeavor to bring out some original ideas, and not be satisfied with making mere copies of ferns and grasses, which though good in a certain way, is certainly not the highest aim of art. Too many artists follow the same beaten path for years, by painting the same subject over and over again, or, if they change the subject, it is to copy the work of a brother artist. This should not be; he, the artist, should give us new subjects, or if he cannot, let him try and make great improvement in his old composition. It is true he may not have the ability to give some new idea, but he can produce a work which will at least show study and care, rather than a mere dexterity of handling the brush, and without a single thought of sentiment. But stop, we do not mean to tell our artists what they must do; we only suggest, in the friendliest manner to them, what the entire profession seems to know—that more endeavors should be made to produce original works.

In the course of our peregrinations through the studios, we found Nehlig, Guy, and Hennessy at home. The trio are figure painters, and in a measure, represent that branch of art in New York. Nehlig has already achieved a reputation for painting battle scenes, and is at present without a rival in that class of subject in this country. He has considerable power of composition—a great dexterity in handling the brush, and frequently a fair amount of color, the drawing of many of his figures is, however, too frequently exaggerated; arms and thighs often being much stouter than the head of the figure. It may be well to exaggerate at times to give perhaps some force in so doing, but when the arm is made twice the fulness of the head, it is going too far, and instead of giving force, it gains weakness, for it is false. His battles are always full of action, full of strife, but too frequently disgust us by undue prominence of some bloody scene. His picture "Testing the Blade," which was exhibited at Goupil's, is one of his best